

*Treasurer.*

J. Sergeant Price.

*Councillors for three years.*

Daniel R. Goodwin,                      W. S. W. Ruschenberger,  
 Henry Winsor, William A. Ingham.

The meeting was then adjourned.

*Obituary Notice of Peter McCall. By Henry Phillips, Jr.*

(Read before the American Philosophical Society, January 7, 1881.)

The life of a lawyer whose heart was not hardened by the arduous duties of his career, but which, through threescore years and ten, never failed to respond to the calls of humanity; who passed along earth's pathway from the cradle to the grave, untainted by sordid ambitions or ignoble aims; in whose footsteps it would be an honor to tread, whose approbation would be a hall-mark to those fortunate enough to win it—the life of such a man is not written in sand. Such a man is an honor to his profession and to his city. Such a man was Peter McCall.

Peter McCall was born in the city of Philadelphia, on the 31st day of August, A. D. 1809, and departed this life at his summer residence, Overbrook, near Philadelphia, on the 30th day of October, A. D. 1880. He was descended from one of the oldest families in Pennsylvania, an account of whose genealogy is given in the Shippen Papers, edited by Mr. Thomas Balch. His father, also named Peter McCall, intermarried with Sarah Gibson, of whom were born John Gibson (born 1804, married at Tampico, Doña Josefa Beccerra), Charles Archibald (born 1806), Anna Maria (born 1807), and Peter, the subject of the present sketch.

Mr. McCall's education was commenced in Philadelphia, and completed at Princeton, where he graduated with distinction in the class of 1826. He then began the study of the law in the office of Hon. Joseph R. Ingersoll, surrounded by fellow students, who all in later years rose to high legal eminence, and some of whom have occupied the judicial station. Pursuing his studies with zealous assiduity, he was admitted to the Philadelphia Bar on the first day of November, A. D. 1830, and from that day, until a few months since, when increasing infirmities compelled him to relinquish the practice of his profession, his career of usefulness was untiring and unceasing. Had he lived but one day longer, he would have completed a full half century of active work, an event which the Law Association of this city, of which he had been for years a prominent member, and in which he had held the office of Chancellor from 1873 to the day of his death, was preparing to celebrate in an appropriate manner. Upon the walls of its library hangs an excellent portrait of Mr. McCall, painted by Uble, which a few years since was presented to the Association by the Chancellor's former office

students. His predecessors in that honorable position had always been like himself, men of the highest rank, whose names the lawyers of the entire land were accustomed to utter with veneration, respect and esteem; Rawle, Duponceau, Sergeant, Binney, Ingersoll and Meredith. Names to be handed, with the best traditions of the Bar, down to its latest days.

In 1846, Mr. McCall married Jane Byrd Mercer, at Cedar Park, West River, Maryland, the residence of her father, Col. John Mercer. Of this marriage were born Catherine, John Mercer, Edith (married to Dr. John M. Keating, of this city), Gertrude, Richard Cadwalader, Robert Kemble, Jane Byrd and Mary. Of these children only the youngest daughters survive, to mourn with their mother their great loss. During the years 1837, 1853 and 1870, Mr. McCall traveled in Europe, storing his mind with the rich harvests of Old World knowledge, while enjoying a brief respite from his arduous labors.

Although no politician, in the now-a-days sadly abused signification of the term, Mr. McCall always felt deep interest in the progress of public affairs, and never shrank from accepting such duties as it pleased his fellow-citizens to call upon him to undertake. He sat in the Councils of the City for several terms, and in 1844 was elected Mayor of the City, as the candidate of the Whig party, defeating by a large vote Samuel Badger, the Democratic, and E. W. Keyser, the Native American candidate. This was to Mr. McCall, a great compliment, paid in a time of strong political excitement by the citizens, who understood and appreciated sterling honor and integrity.

On the 18th day of April, 1851, he was chosen a member of our Society, but owing to the continual pressure of other duties, never took an active part in our labors.

He was for many years one of the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, in whose law schools, he, until comparatively recently filled the chair of practice, pleading, and evidence.

Mr. McCall was for a time a member of the Vestry of Christ Church (Protestant Episcopal), and also Warden, but after long and faithful services rendered by him to the cause of religion and of the Church, in the early days of the war, his connection with it came to an end.

While the public record of Mr. McCall's life is mainly that of a professional man, yet he was a cultured scholar of refined tastes and great attainments. But he very rarely permitted himself to be seduced by the fascinations of the lighter sciences from the pursuit of the life-long duties to which he had dedicated his career. He knew that the law was a jealous and exacting mistress, in whose service there could be no loitering by the wayside or stepping from the beaten track to cull the flowers of literary success; that it required the devotion of a lifetime, sharing no divided attention, brooking no divided empire. The chief occasions upon which Mr. McCall would permit his literary talents to be observed, were in obituary addresses upon deceased members of our Bar, which he delivered by request, from time to time, in accordance with the kindly usage of the

profession, and his special gifts of eloquence and good taste on such occasions, were always exhibited to great advantage.

He delivered, however, some orations, which have been published, and are all distinguished by a vigorous and elegant style,\* clear thought and polished judgment.

Prominent in Mr. McCall's character were his kindness, gentleness and loving heart. As Judge Hare well remarked,† "he was one of those exceptional men whom nature seems to have formed for virtue, and who are endowed by her with graces which others derive only from education, or through the influences of philosophy and religion. His distinguishing characteristics were singleness of purpose, an entire purity of heart and life, a gentleness that neither took nor gave offence; a charity large enough to embrace all mankind; an instinctive aversion to whatever was low or base; an intuitive perception of the line of right. \* \* \* \* He was in short one in whom the various attributes of goodness were so nicely blended in a harmonious whole that he seemed less than he really was; and it may be said of him, as it was of Washington, that he would have been greater in the world's eye had he been less virtuous."

In his earliest life he had set before himself a standard of virtuous excellence to which he proposed to attain, and below which he should never descend. He wrote in his diary upon the nineteenth anniversary of his birthday, "The prospect is fair. May it never be clouded by dishonor or the consciousness of having done an ill deed."

Throughout all the trials, great and small of daily life, he remained true to his principles, the ideal advocate, the man of honor, the accomplished gentleman.

He was a bold man, strong in the consciousness of rectitude, and not for all the world could give, the smiles of friends, the pleasures of power, did he ever for an instant hesitate to obey the dictates of his conscience, regardless of the penalties to be paid for his independence. "He was faithful to his convictions of truth when such fidelity cost dear."

It would not be proper that I should consume so much of the time of our Society as would be really requisite to delineate Mr. McCall's life, and I must close with this imperfect sketch of the main features of his career. But I leave it with the less regret, knowing that to the accomplished hand of Isaac Hazlehurst, the life-long friend of Mr. McCall, has been entrusted by the Law Association, the duty of preparing a memorial address, and I am sure that his eloquent pen will do justice to departed worth; that he will not fail to suitably commemorate

"That best portion of a good man's life,  
"His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
"Of kindness and of love."

\* November 29th, 1832. Annual discourse before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

January 4th, 1836. Oration before the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania.

September 5th, 1838. A discourse before the Law Academy of Philadelphia.

† Bar meeting held on November 4, 1880.